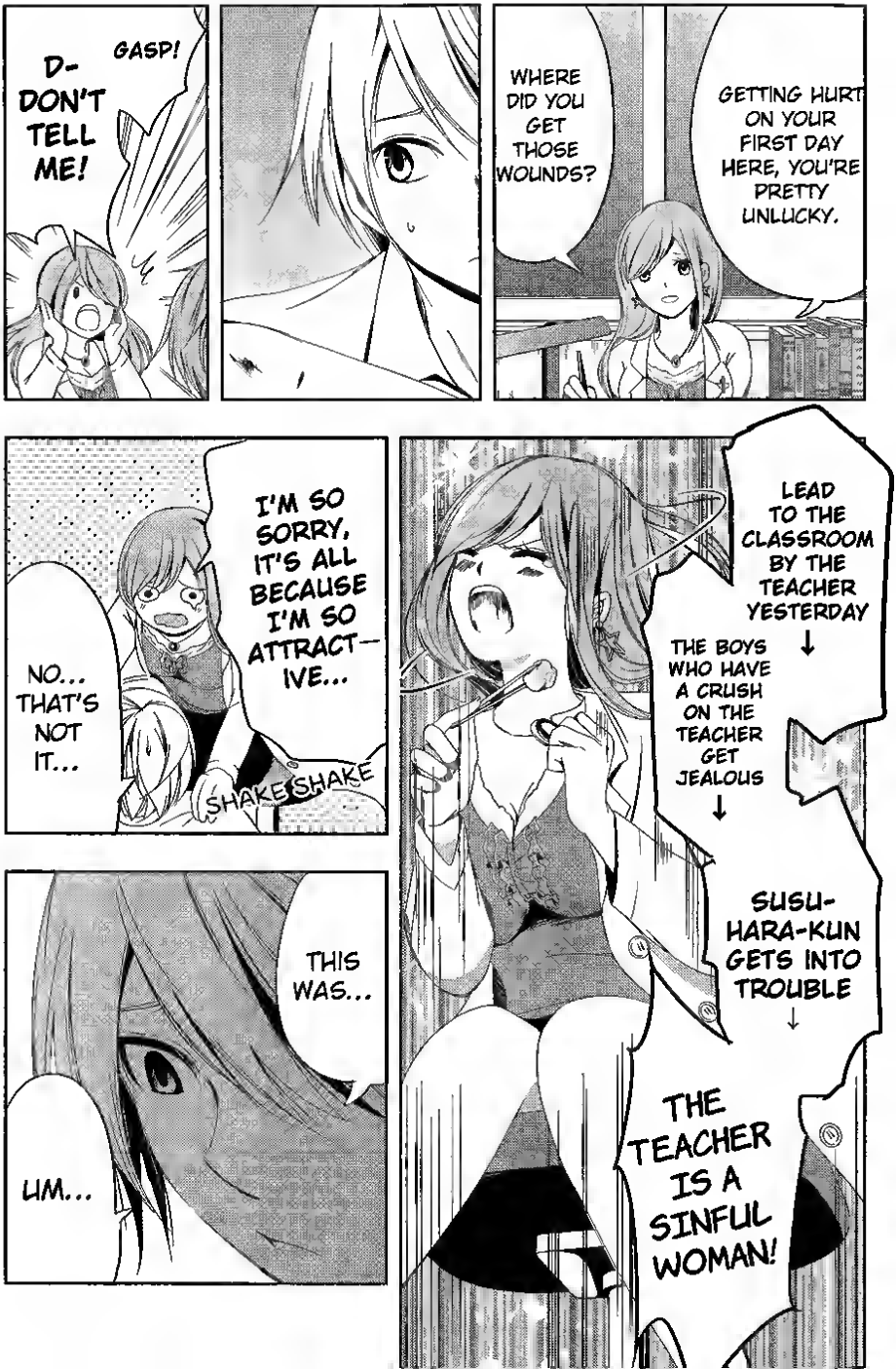
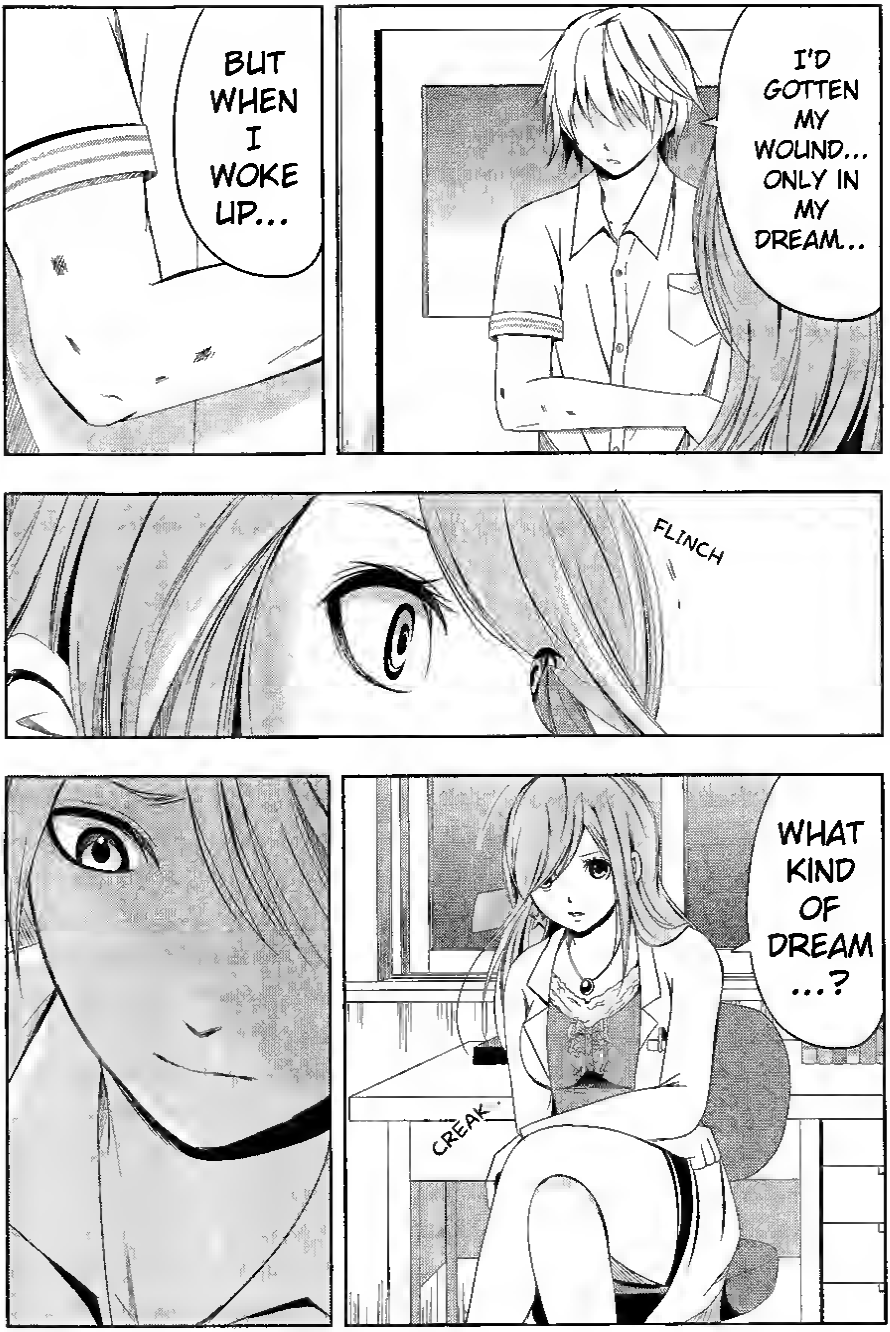
THERE'S SOMETHING REFLECTED IN THOSE EMPTY EYES...
CHAPTER 2: THE SHACHIHOKO CLUB

INFIRMARY
WIPE
WIPE
FROM NIGHTMARE TO THE MORNING...
WIPE
I'M GLAD IT WASN'T ANYTHING TOO BAD.
YOU SHOULD BE FINE NOW.
OKAY.
HINA-GATA-SENSEI
THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR CHECKING UP ON ME.
-*THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION. ANY RESEMBLANCE TO REAL PEOPLE, ORGANIZATIONS OR GROUPS IS ENTIRELY COINCIDENTAL


GASP!
D-DON'T TELL ME!
WHERE DID YOU GET THOSE WOUNDS?
GETTING HURT ON YOUR FIRST DAY HERE, YOU'RE PRETTY UNLUCKY.
I'M SO SORRY, IT'S ALL BECAUSE I'M SO ATTRACT— IVE...
NO... THAT'S NOT IT...
SHAKE SHAKE
LEAD TO THE CLASSROOM BY THE TEACHER YESTERDAY
↓
THE BOYS WHO HAVE A CRUSH ON THE TEACHER GET JEALOUS
↓
SUSU-HARA-KUN GETS INTO TROUBLE
↓
THE TEACHER IS A SINFUL WOMAN!
THIS WAS...
UM...


BUT WHEN I WOKE UP...
I'D GOTTEN MY WOUND... ONLY IN MY DREAM...
FLINCH
WHAT KIND OF DREAM ...?
CREAK

I WAS ATTACKED BY A MONSTER...
AND THEN KUROKAMI-SAN... CLAWED INTO MY ARM...
AH, WELL,
I THINK I WAS JUST HALF-ASLEEP AND THEN MANAGED TO HURT MYSELF SOMEHOW.
I'M SORRY. I KNOW THIS SOUNDS STRANGE...

TURN
...SUSU-HARA-KUN.
GETTING YOUR-SELF HURT AFTER A SCARY DREAM MEANS YOU'RE STILL A LITTLE BOY♡
RIGHT ...

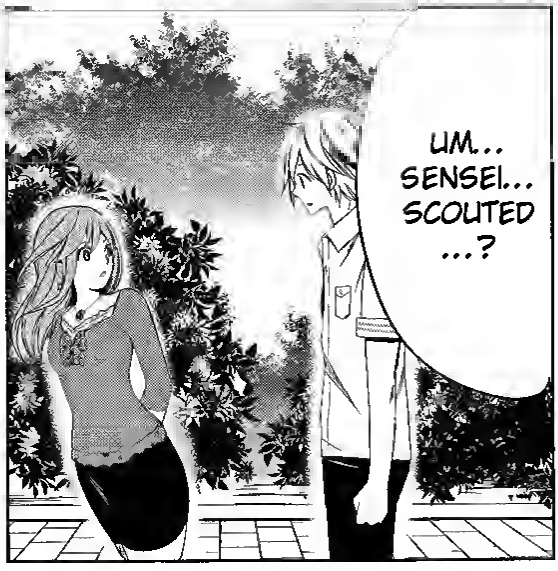
HEY.
ENOUGH ABOUT THAT.
AS THANKS FOR THE MEDICAL TREAT-MENT,
DON'T YOU FEEL LIKE PAYING WITH YOUR BODY?

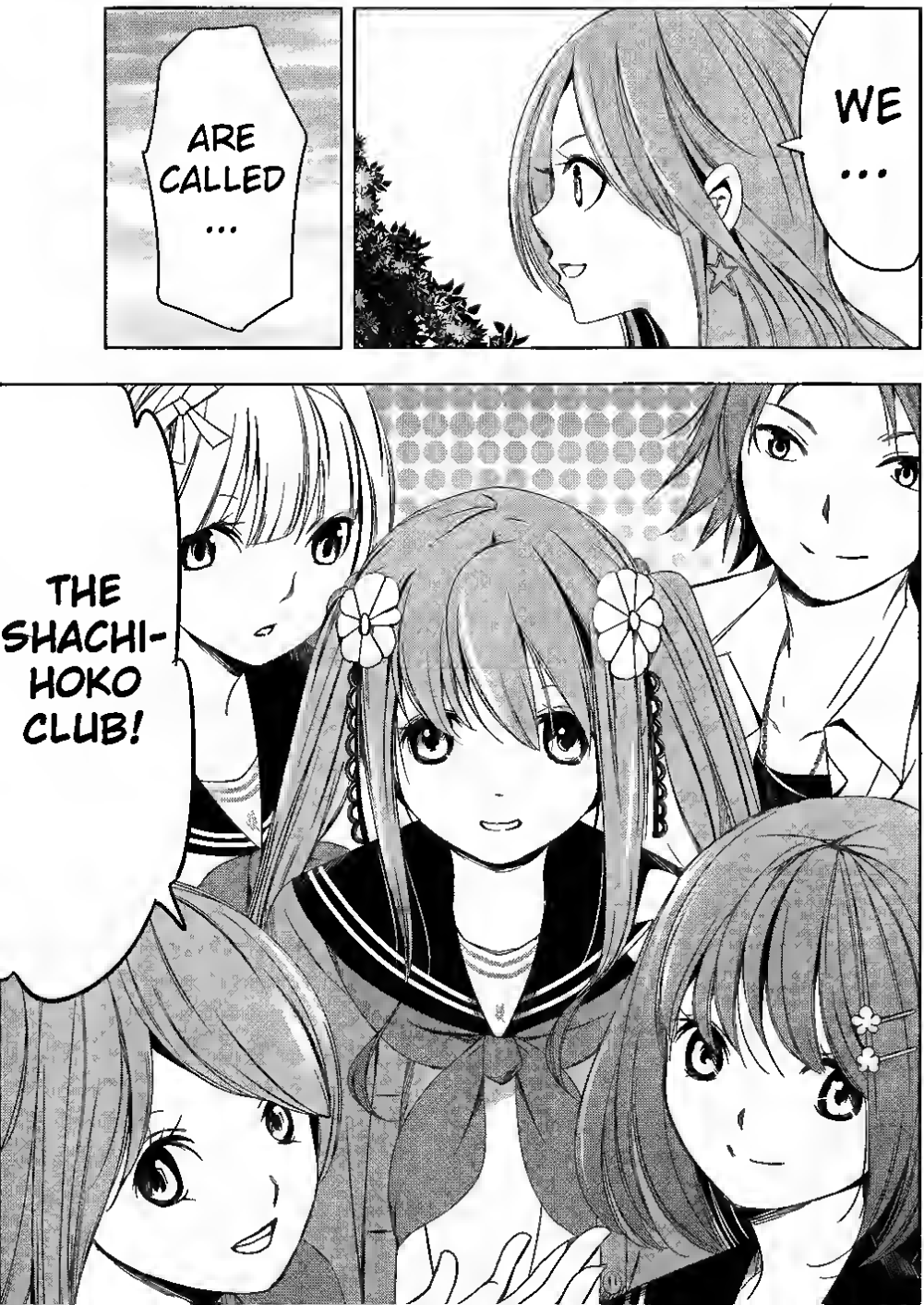
MAP
PANT
HUFF
HUFF
SENSEI, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
PANT
I'M... FINE...
PANT
W-WE'RE FINALLY HERE...

HEH-HEH! I SCOUTED HIM OUT!

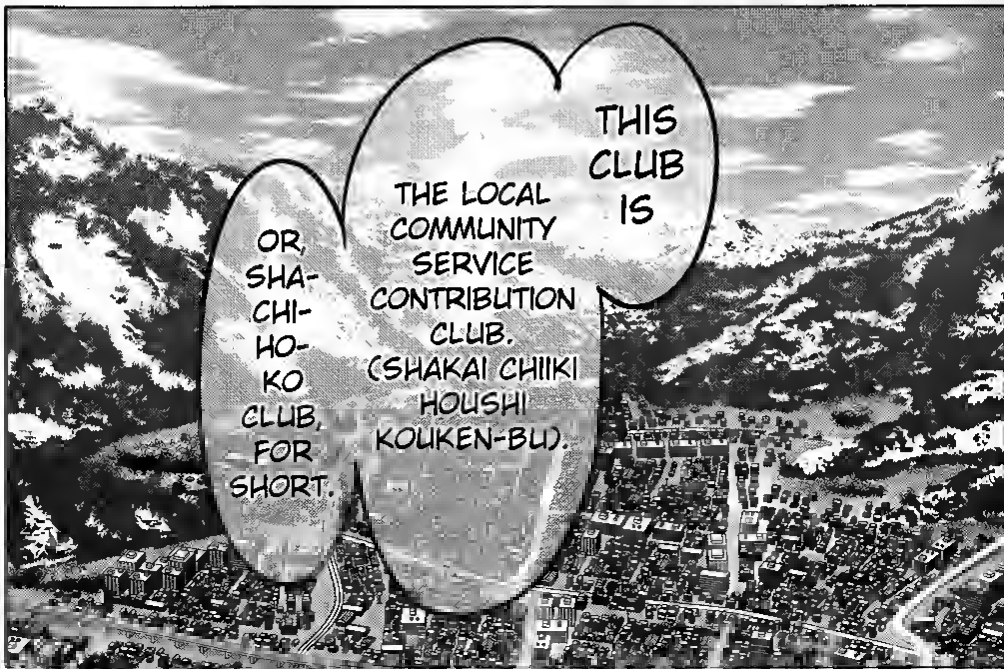
SUZUMU!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE?

SENSEI ...
OH DEAR, I DIDN'T TELL YOU?


UM... SENSEI... SCOUTED ...?

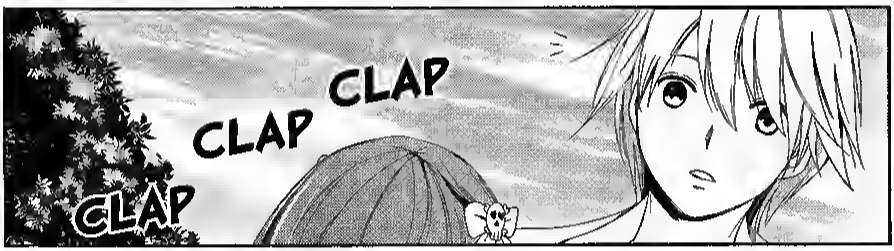

ARE CALLED ...
WE ...
THE SHACHI-HOKO CLUB!

TL Note: A "shachihoko" is an animal in Japanese folklore with the head of a tiger and the body of a carp.


THIS CLUB IS
THE LOCAL COMMUNITY SERVICE CONTRIBUTION CLUB. (SHAKAI CHIIKI HOUSHI KOUKEN-BU).
OR, SHA-CHI-HO-KO CLUB, FOR SHORT.

WE HAVE FIVE MEMBERS IN TOTAL.
I GO OUT SCOUTING FOR MEMBERS IN PERSON.
IT'S A VOLUNTEER CLUB FOR THE TOWN OF SUSUDA.
AND IT'S ALSO A HAPPY-HAPPY CLUB WHERE YOU MAKE THE PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY HAPPY.
A CLUB THAT SERVES FOR THE PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY...
IT'S GOT THE SAME MINDSET AS THE SUSUHARA-STYLE SHINTO MARTIAL ARTS; OFFERING GRATITUDE TO ALL...
KIKO-CHAN.
NOD

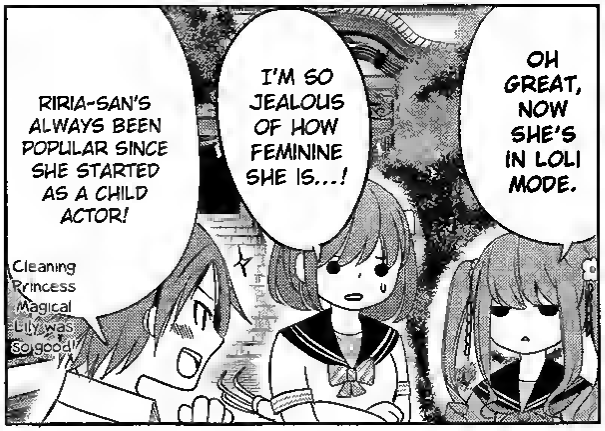
THIS SOUNDS LIKE A GREAT CLUB.
WHY NOT? I'D... LIKE YOU TO HAVE ME IN THIS CLUB.
YAY! I'M SO HAPPY THAT WE GET TO BE IN THE SAME CLUB TOGETHER!
LET'S WORK HARD!


CLAP
CLAP
CLAP

WELCOME ABOARD! LET'S SPEND OUR YOUTH TOGETHER, VOLUNTEERING!
HUH, WE FINALLY GOT A RECRUIT~
WHAT A SURPRISE ♡

MY NAME IS SUSUHARA SUZUMU. I TRANSFERRED HERE YESTERDAY
I'M VERY PLEASED TO BE ACQUAINTED WITH YOU ALL.
NOW THAT YOU'RE A MEMBER, YOU SHOULD GO AND INTRODUCE YOURSELF!
R-RIGHT.
HE'S ALSO A RELATIVE OF MINE.
PLEASE TREAT HIM WELL.
YOU GO FIRST, CHIEF!
D-DON'T CALL ME CHIEF...
AHEM

I'M NUNOKAWA RIRIA, A FIRST-YEAR! I WORK AS AN IDOL AND STUFF!
I'M SO HAPPY YOU GET TO BE HERE, ONII-CHAN ♡
I'M MINOBE KANAE, A THIRD-YEAR.
BE SURE NOT TO CALL ME CHIEF.
THERE'S A LOTTA HEAVY WORK, SO HAVING MORE MEMBERS REALLY HELPS US.


OH GREAT, NOW SHE'S IN LOLI MODE.
I'M SO JEALOUS OF HOW FEMININE SHE IS...!
RIRIA-SAN'S ALWAYS BEEN POPULAR SINCE SHE STARTED AS A CHILD ACTOR!
Cleaning Princess Magical Lily was so good!

BEST RE-GARDS. ♡
OH, UH, ALL RIGHT.
grip ♡

LEAN
---SO I'M ATSUTA NATSUYA. WE'RE IN THE SAME CLASS.
GOOD TO HAVE YA HERE!
HEY...
WHISPER...
DID YOU REALLY FIGHT WITH KAMENUMA SHOU?
KAME-NUMA...

I-I WOULDN'T CALL IT A FIGHT...
I WAS JUST TRYING TO HELP KUROKAMI -SAN...
YOU'RE SERIOUS, AIN'TCHA? ISN'T THAT TOO COOL FOR YOUR FIRST DAY HERE?!
YOU'RE GREAT!
ALL RIGHT, YOU'RE GETTING TOO EXCITED THERE
THAT'S ALL FOR OUR INTRO-DUC-TIONS
HUH?

1
2
3
4
THERE ARE FIVE MEMBERS HERE, RIGHT?
THE FIFTH MEMBER IS
KURO-KAMI-SAN...

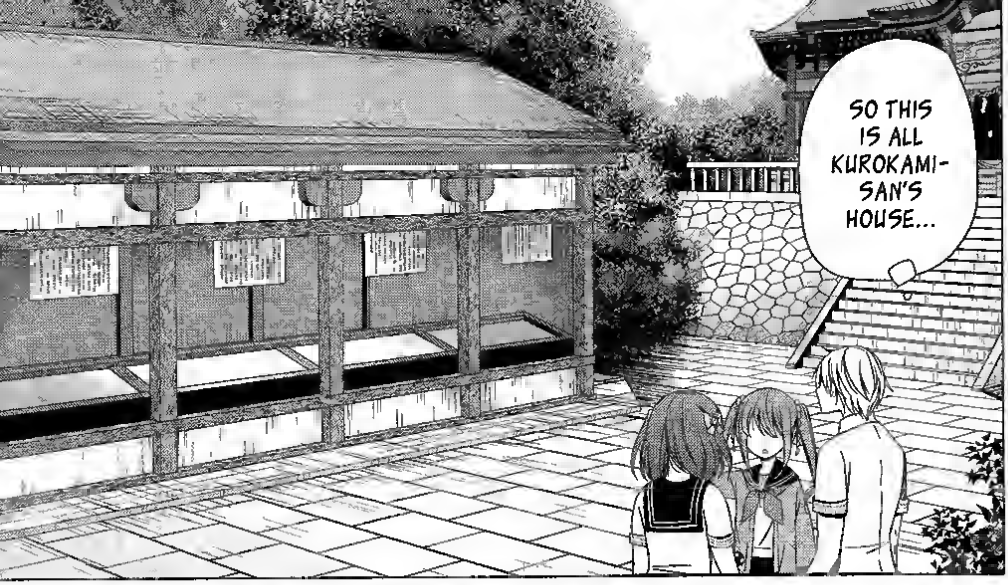
THEN KUROCCHI'S ALSO IN YOUR CLASS, RIGHT?
...IF NACCHI'S IN YOUR CLASS,
YOU'VE SEEN HOW SHE ACTS, RIGHT?
THERE'S SOMETHING WEIRD ABOUT HER.
WEIRD ...

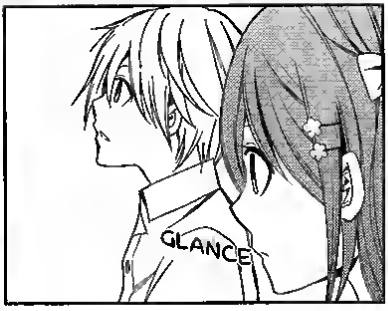
YOU SAW HOW SHE WAS IN THE CLASS-ROOM, RIGHT?
SHE JUST COMES IN AND SOMETIMES DOESN'T COME AT ALL, YA KNOW
SHE'S A GHOST MEMBER!
OOOOH
SHE DOESN'T SEEM LIKE SHE COULD PARTAKE IN ANY CLUB ACTIVITIES... SO WHY?
CLAP
CLAP
THAT'S ENOUGH CHIT-CHAT.
IF WE DON'T START SOON, THE SUN WILL SET.

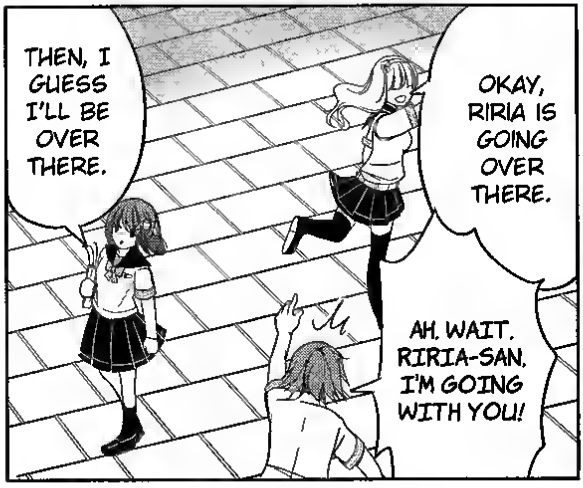
TODAY'S ACTIVITY IS
CLEAN-ING UP THE IWAIMOTO SHRINE~
IT'S REALLY WIDE, ISN'T IT?
THE COMMUNITY CAN'T KEEP IT CLEAN BY ITSELF, SO THE SHACHIHOKO CLUB HAS TO HELP.

YEAH... TRUE, IT'S PRETTY BIG AND REALLY SPLENDID, TOO.
RIGHT? THERE'S A STRONG BELIEF HERE THAT'S BEEN GOING ON FOR A THOUSAND YEARS OF HISTORY...
THERE ARE STILL PEOPLE WHO CALL THIS TOWN "IWAIMOTO", EVEN NOW.
ONE-THOUSAND YEARS AGO, THE TOWN OF SUSUDA FELL INTO A FAMINE.
THE WORD WAS THAT A DEER GOD HAD SAVED THE TOWN.
THEY WORSHIPED THAT GOD FOR GEN-ERATIONS.

YOU'RE RIGHT...
SEE? JUST LOOK UP THERE.
WELL, WELL.
I MEAN, IT IS HER HOUSE.
IT'D BE GOOD IF KUROCCHI COULD BE HERE~
I SEE.


SO THIS IS ALL KUROKAMI-SAN'S HOUSE...


GLANCE

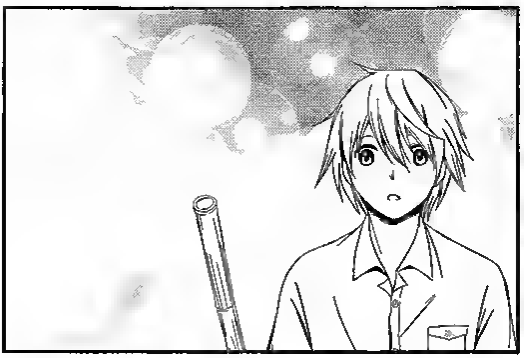

THEN, I GUESS I'LL BE OVER THERE.
OKAY, RIRIA IS GOING OVER THERE.
AH, WAIT, RIRIA-SAN, I'M GOING WITH YOU!

ALL RIGHT, SPLIT INTO GROUPS AND START CLEANING~

SWEEP
SWEEP
SILENCE
HEY.
UMM... WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING...
NO PROB.
TH-THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
HERE'S A BROOM.
UH, CHIEF.

I TOLD YOU NOT TO CALL ME CHIEF.
IT REALLY FEELS BOTHER-SOME.
AH, S-SORRY.
... MINOBE-SENPAI.
OH, THAT'S GOT A GOOD RING TO IT.
I KNOW I'M WELL RESPECTED BY THE UNDER-CLASSMEN, BUT I'M A VERY RELIABLE SENPAI.
SO WHAT'CHU WANT, SUZUMUN?
SUZU-MUN...?
UMM... WHERE DO YOU THINK I SHOULD CLEAN?
MMMM ...

I MEAN, LOOK AT ALL THIS SPACE.
THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN CLEAN ALL OF IT.
WHER-EVER.
EH...
.....



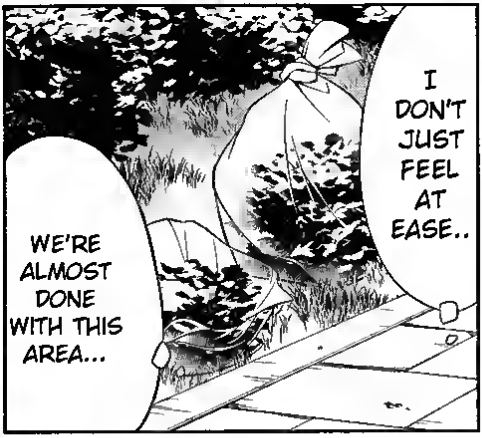
OH, WAIT, BUT IF YOU JUST JOINED HERE AND I'M ALL ALONE.
HMM...

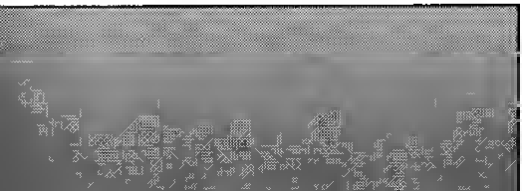
BRUSH
WHAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT,
IS DOING EVERYTHING YOU CAN...

I'M SURE NACCHI WANTS TO BE WITH LILIAN.
AND I'M SURE LILIAN'LL FEEL MORE AT EASE WITH NACCHI AS HER SERVANT.
AND KIKOCHI'S THE TYPE THAT PREFERS TO WORK ALONE.

AH...

YOU'RE HERE TO WORK TOGETHER WITH ME.
AND MAKES ME MORE AT EASE.
RIGHT.

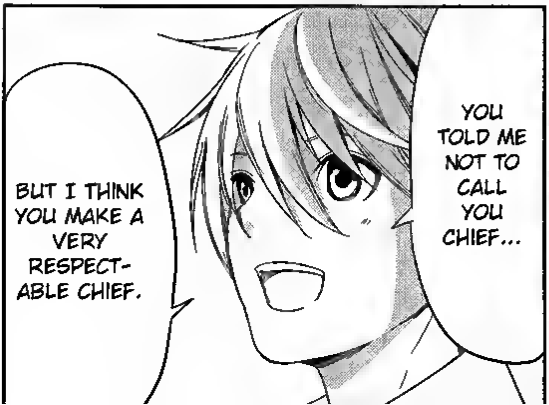

I DON'T JUST FEEL AT EASE..
WE'RE ALMOST DONE WITH THIS AREA...

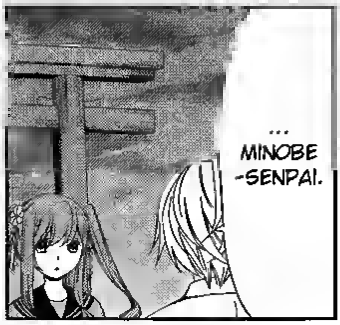


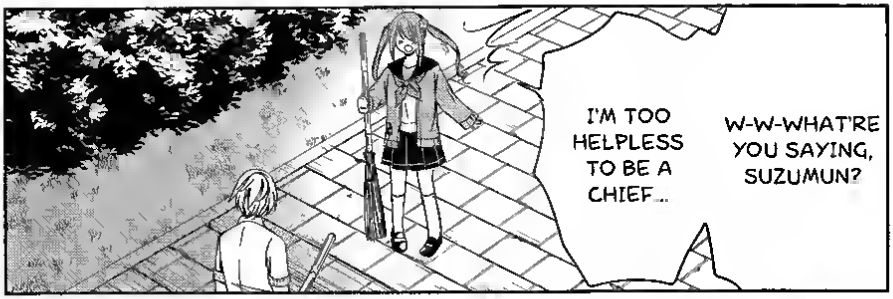
AH, I'M SO TIRED.
THIS NEVER ENDS.

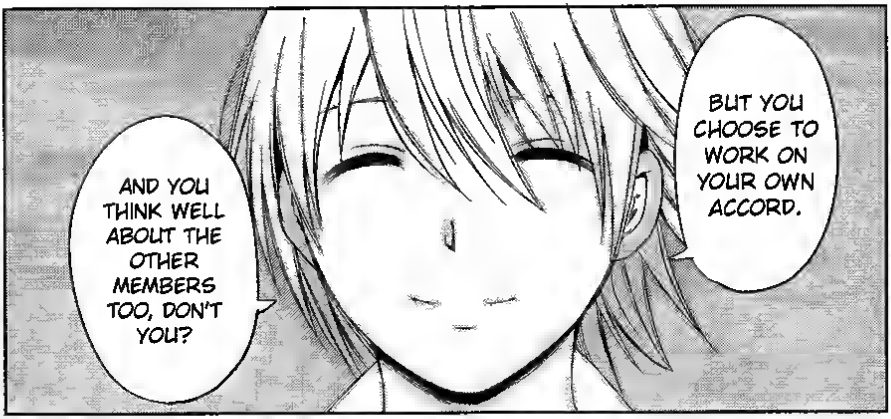
?
WHAT?
SMILE

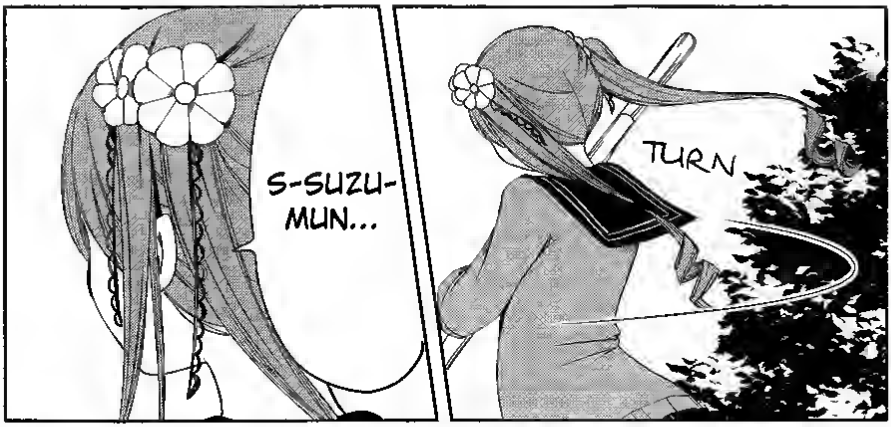
I SHOULD GO 'N' STOP KIKOCHI NOW~
SHE WORKS TOO HARD AND DOESN'T KNOW WHEN TO QUIT.

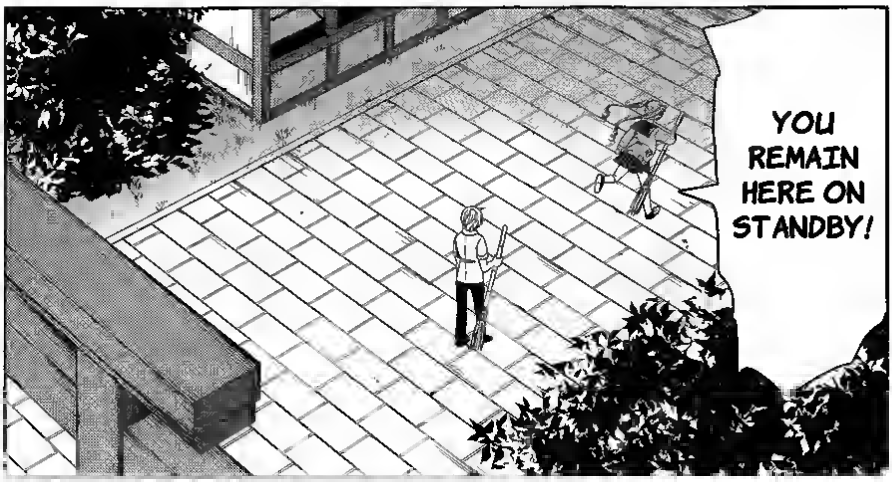

YOU TOLD ME NOT TO CALL YOU CHIEF...
BUT I THINK YOU MAKE A VERY RESPECT-ABLE CHIEF.

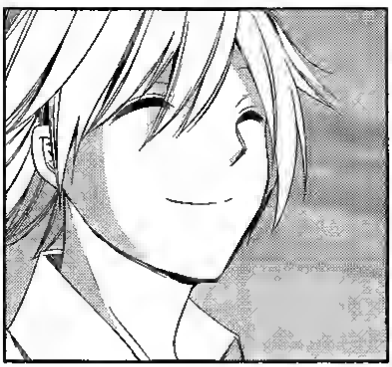

... MINOBE -SENPAI.


W-W-WHAT'RE YOU SAYING, SUZUMUN?
I'M TOO HELPLESS TO BE A CHIEF...


BUT YOU CHOOSE TO WORK ON YOUR OWN ACCORD.
AND YOU THINK WELL ABOUT THE OTHER MEMBERS TOO, DON'T YOU?

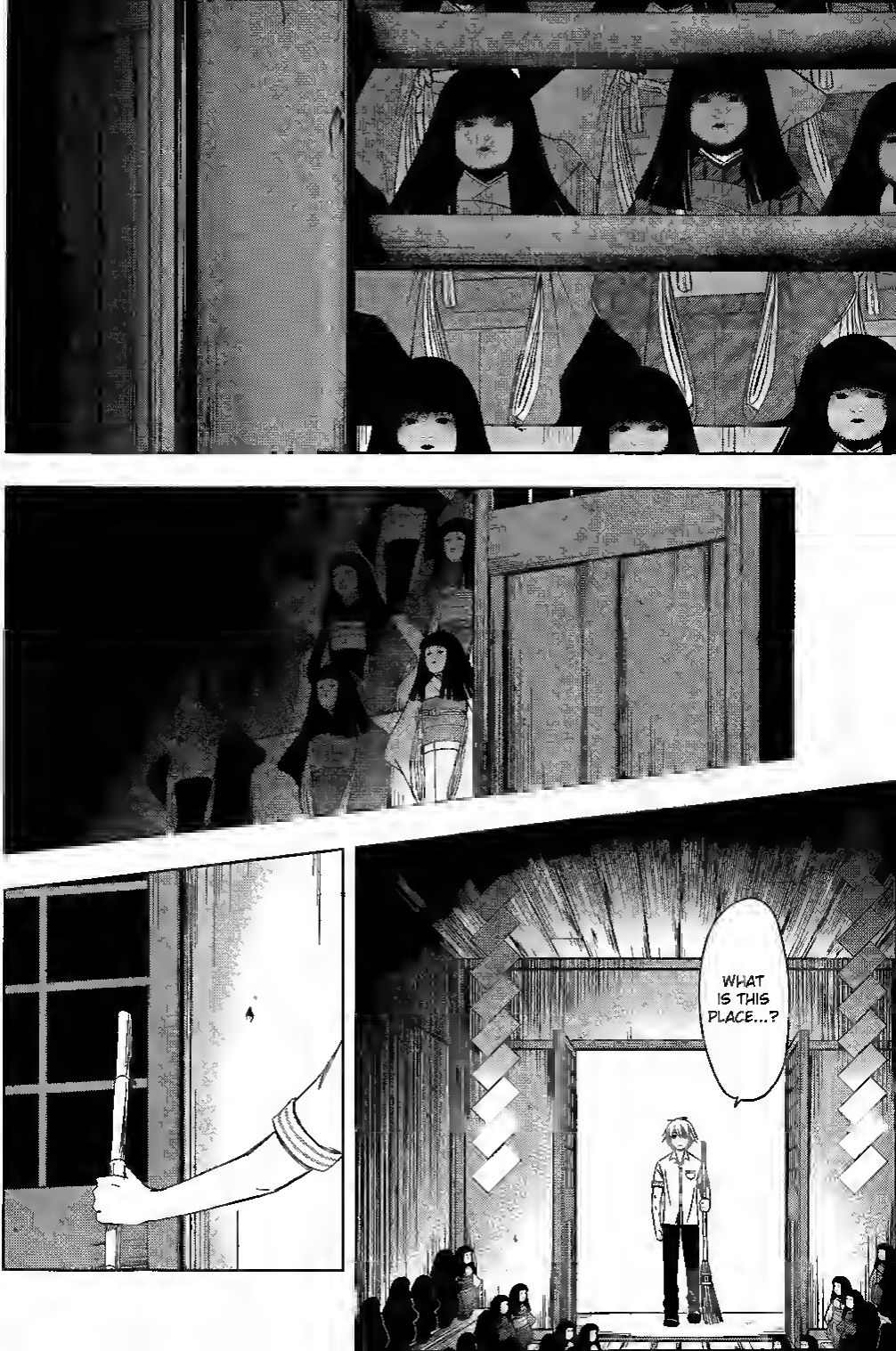

S-SUZU-
MUN...
TURN


YOU
REMAIN
HERE ON
STANDBY!

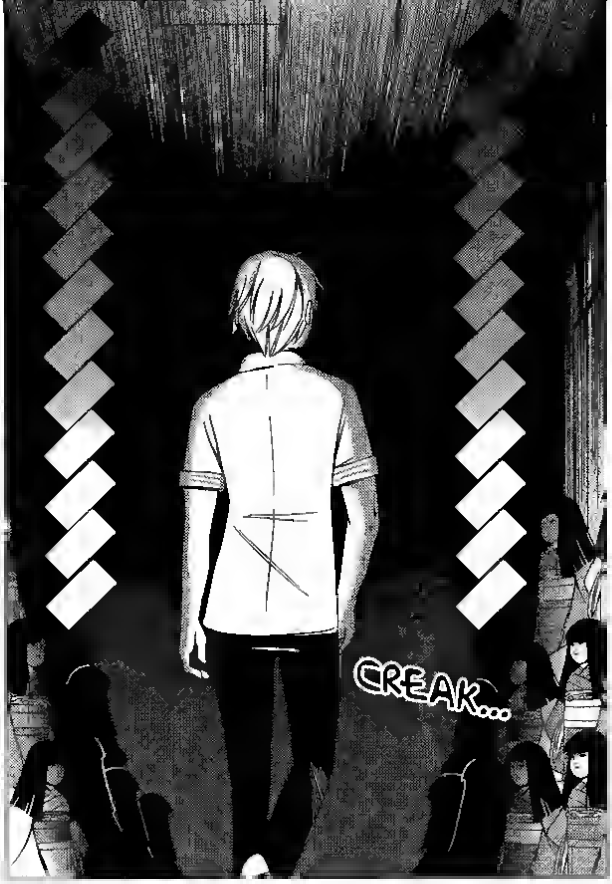


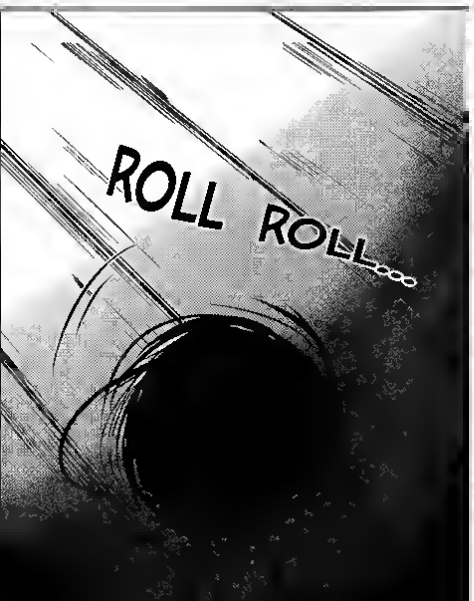
RUSTLE
WHERE DO I CLEAN NEXT...

...DONE IN THIS AREA, TOO...


WHAT IS THIS PLACE...?

THERE ARE SO MANY DOLLS ...
ARE THEY DOING SOME KIND OF MEMORIAL SERVICE OR A RITUAL...?


CREAK...


ROLL ROLL...

BAM

...
WOAH!

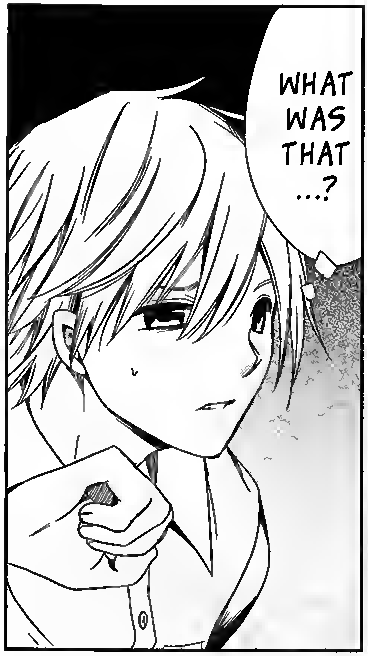
...
SOOT
?
...IT'S KIND OF DIRTY...
...IT'S THE HEAD OF A DOLL...
I HAD SOOT ON MY ELBOW AFTER THAT DREAM, TOO.

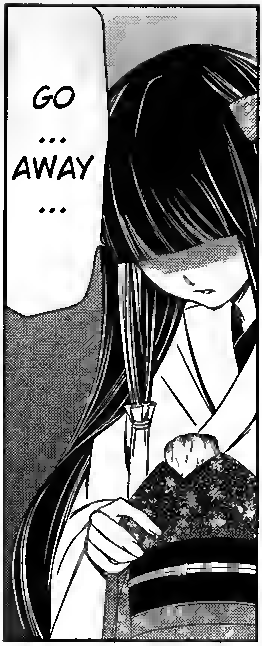
KURO-KAMI-SAN...
THAT DOLL...
HAS OUTLIVED ITS PURPOSE.

SUSU-
HARA.
...EH?
GO
...
AWAY
...

WIPE WIPE

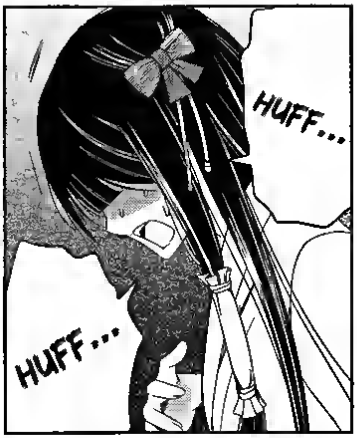
!?


WHAT WAS THAT ...?


GO ... AWAY ...

AH ... OKAY ...
THEN I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN AT SCHOOL ...
GUH ...!

It...
It... hurts...


HUFF...
HUFF...

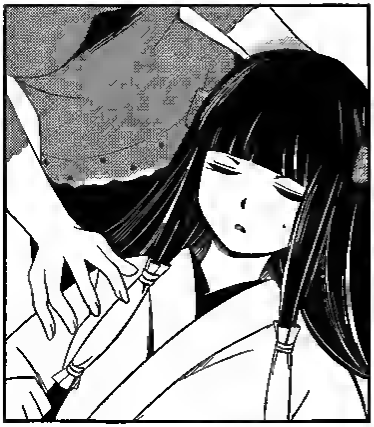
DROP

STAGGER
DASH
KURO-
KAMI-
SAN!

THIS IS BAD.
FWP
SHE'S IN PAIN...
PANT
PANT
You...
Suzu-mu...

YOUR SOOT ...
S... S-SOOT ... IS... HURT-ING ME...

SHAKE
SHAKE
SHAKE...
SUSU-
HARA-
KUN?!



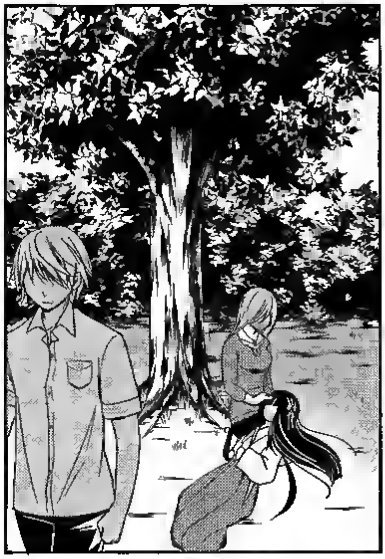
HER PULSE IS ALL RIGHT. ...IT LOOKS LIKE SHE'S CALMED DOWN.
SHE'S SLEEPING RIGHT NOW. I'LL GO LOOK AFTER HER, SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY.

.....
SENSE!...

BUT...
SUSU-HARA-KUN, YOU SHOULD GO BACK TO EVERYONE IN THE SHACHI-HOKO CLUB.

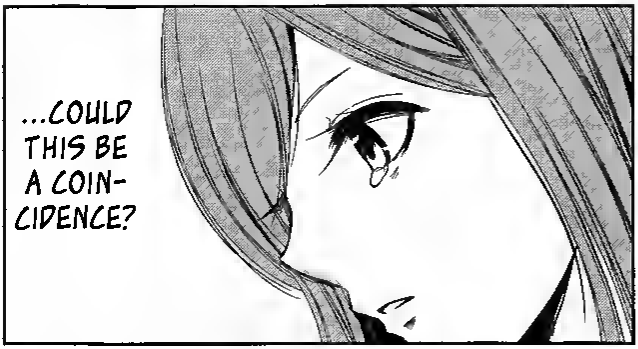
KURO KAMI-SAN...
WHAT IS SHE?
THAT'S NOT A NICE THING TO SAY TO YOUR OWN CLASSMATE.
SHE'S QUITE NORMAL... NO, SHE'S A VERY ADORABLE GIRL.
...BUT,
EVER SINCE I'VE MET WITH KUROKAMI-SAN, I'VE ALWAYS HAD STRANGE THINGS HAPPENING TO ME.
AND ALSO... SHE SAID THAT MY "SOOT" WAS HURTING HER...
.....
SUSU-HARA-KUN.

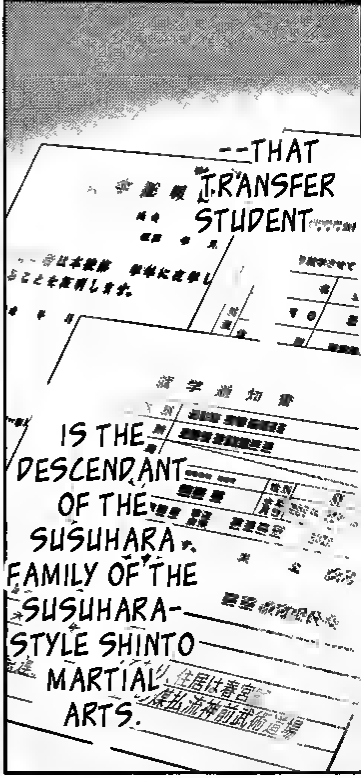
I
...
OKAY
...

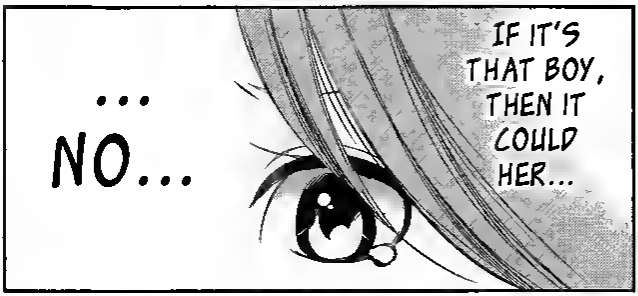


GO.

YOU'RE HURTING, AREN'T YOU...?
HUFF...
...KURO-KAMI-SAN...
YOU POOR THING...
.....


...COULD THIS BE A COINCIDENCE?


--THAT TRANSFER STUDENT
IS THE DESCENDANT OF THE SUSUHARA FAMILY OF THE SUSUHARA-STYLE SHINTO MARTIAL ARTS.


...
NO...
IF IT'S THAT BOY, THEN IT COULD HER...

THEIR...
CURSE...
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WAS THEIR MEETING A COINCIDENCE, OR...

HOT CHOCOLATE SCANS
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